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11 SEP 1963

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

10 September 1963

*File*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

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SUBJECT:

Herewith comments which you may wish to forward to  
the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

SHERMAN KENT  
Chairman

AD/NE:SKENT:mg:  (10Sep63)

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COMMENTS

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Virtually every recommendation [redacted]  
has merit, though to the full-time professional estimator  
some aspects of the Committee's suggestions have greater  
practical appeal than others. Specific comments follow:

a. Re paragraph 1, page R1, "Cut down the  
number of coordinated papers."

The need to guard against overloading, and to  
assure ample time for deliberation is a very valid  
point, and cutting down the number of coordinated  
papers may be a sensible move. My own thought is  
that the remedy may lie, not in rejecting certain  
countries as unsuitable for estimates, but in modi-  
fying the long-standing approach to country estimates  
so that they concentrate more on certain key estimative  
questions about the country, and avoid the across-the-  
board treatment which is time-consuming and often more  
appropriate for departmental intelligence or other  
forms of staff studies.

b. Re paragraph 2, page R2, Composition of the  
Board of National Estimates.

Certainly no disagreement in principle with the  
rotating members proposal, but experience shows that,  
except in the most unusual cases, a man is just  
beginning to make his contribution after a year, and  
the short-term concept would involve considerable waste  
of talent. Furthermore, whatever may be the desideratum,  
recruiting men with the appropriate qualifications and

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seniority for such service ~~etc~~ write another thing. It is terribly difficult. On the whole, we see more promise in the ad hoc use of selected consultants to obtain fresh perspectives (Recommendation No. 4, page R3) than in this proposal. We have a comprehensive plan for this sort of thing in the works.

U. Re paragraph 5, page R3, Indicate when earlier estimates are being quoted or paraphrased.

We have no quarrel with the desirability of constant comparison with, and reexamination of, earlier estimates. We do it ourselves all the time, and it might prove useful to the consumer to provide more such references. It would, however, be a mistake to set up any formal routine or device for doing so, since its usefulness and how it is best done differ widely with cases.

d. Re paragraph 6, page R4, Be bolder in estimating impact of US policy and attitudes.

We are all aware of the tricky problems and dangers here, but concur in the Committee's feeling that something ought to be done. One possibility: some loosening of present restrictions on certain documents relevant to key estimative questions but often denied to those charged with drafting the estimates.

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